

Turks and Caicos Islands Government
Ministry of Natural Resources
(Department of Environment and Coastal Resources)

National Policy for the Management and Development of the Fisheries Sector



2005-2010



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**National Policy for the Management and
Development of the Fisheries Sector**

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Preface

This National Fisheries Policy was prepared by the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, in keeping with its mandate and guided by the principles of the Environmental Charter, "to use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations".

Management of the natural resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands is the responsibility of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources (D.E.C.R.). Prior to the early 1990's, the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands mainly did the management of the natural resources via 'ad hoc' decision-making without clear articulation of a long-term national policy. However, with the rapid increase in tourism and tourism related development in the Turks and Caicos Islands in the early 1990's, it became apparent that more stringent development codes would have to be implemented, guided by a well defined national policy in order to protect the environment. As such, the outline of a national environmental policy was developed, but the Government never ratified it.

Considering the high levels of environmental degradation, depletion of fishery resources, and unsustainable practices in many countries throughout the world and the Caribbean region, the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands has committed itself to the protection of the environment and the natural resources of the country, in order to maintain the attractiveness and appeal of the islands as an exquisite tourism destination which is truly "*beautiful by nature.*"

Since the economic base of the TCI is embedded in the use of natural resources, the economic development of the country and maintenance of the standards of living to which Turks and Caicos Islanders have become accustomed is predicated on the effectiveness of environmental conservation strategies. A focus on the fisheries and tourism development is therefore critical in the conservation process because of the prominence of these sectors in the Islands' economy.

The Turks and Caicos Islands is recognized as a major exporter of spiny lobster and queen conch. Those are the products of the two main marine fisheries of the country. Together, lobster and conch products have accounted for over 90 % of the TCI exports since the mid 1960's. Although other marine fisheries, such as groupers and snappers, are also exploited, these are mainly targeted for local consumption. The snappers and groupers as well as the other fishery resources in the Turks and Caicos Islands are believed to be under-utilized.

This policy will therefore serve not only as a guideline for the management of the exploited resources, but will also provide direction for the further development of other aspects of the fisheries sector, such as sport fishing, commercial exploitation of large pelagics and aquaculture development.



Table of Content

Preface	2
Table of Contents	3
Glossary of Acronyms	4
1.0 Fisheries and the National Economy; Perspective and Overall Policy	
Objective	5
1.1 National Development Strategy; Policies, Goals and Objectives	5
1.2 Fisheries Development Policy	5
1.3 Environmental Protection Policy ,.....	7
1.4 Tourism Development Policy	8
2.0 Profile of the Fisheries Sector	8
2.1 Status of the Fishery Resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands	8
2.1.1 Overview: The marine fishery	8
2.1.2 Total Production and Trade	8
2.1.3 Catch history	9
2.1.4 Status of the lobster fishery	9
2.1.5 Status of the conch fishery	9
2.1.6 Status of the fin-fish fishery	10
2.2 Mariculture & Aquaculture	10
2.3 Institutional Structure of the Turks and Caicos Islands Marine Fisheries	10
2.3.1 Fisheries and Environmental protection legislations	10
2.3.2 Institutional framework for management	11
2.3.3 Funding	13
2.3.4 Institutional capacity of the D.E.C.R	14
2.3.5 Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS)	14
2.3.6 Quality assurance for marine products in the TCI	14
2.3.7 Factors limiting the effective management of the marine resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands	15
3.0 Execution of the Fisheries Policy	15
3.1 Challenges to the Implementation of the Fishery Policy	16
4.0 Guiding Principles of the National Fisheries Policy	16
5.0 Policy Statement	22
5.1 Strategy for Implementation	22
5.2 Vision Statement	22
5.3 Policy Goals	22
5.4 Policy Objectives	23



Glossary

Acronyms and Abbreviations

D.E.C.R.	Department of Environment & Coastal Resources
CRFM	Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism
LRP	Limit Reference Point
MEY	Maximum Economic Yield
MSY	Maximum Sustainable Yield
OSY	Optimum Sustainable Yield
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
TRP	Target Reference Point



1.0 Fisheries and the National Economy

1.1 National Development Strategy, Policies, Goals, Objectives

The long-term vision of the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, as outlined in the TCI National Development Strategy and guided by the Environmental Charter, includes:

- Pursuance of well-informed strategic, economic and financial policies which promote sustainable development and a decent standard of living for the people of the TCI.
- Achievement of greater functional and geographical diversification of economic activity, so as to reduce the TCI's economic vulnerability and to spread the benefits of economic growth more widely among its inhabitants.
- Implementation of policies and strategies to protect the interest of Turks and Caicos Islanders, thereby empowering them to derive optimum benefits from the development of the TCI.
- Initiation of measures contributing to the fusion of a dignified and confident nation at peace with itself and the world, a nation whose people believe in themselves and who, in their entrepreneurial, professional and other daily pursuits, and energized by dignity and national pride.
- Provision of sound health and educational services (based on the most appropriate technologies and competent staff) which are available to all.
- To use our natural resources wisely, being fair to present and future generations

1.2 Fisheries Development Policy

Although protection of fisheries resources are implicit in the overall development strategy of the TCI, the importance of the fisheries sector in present and future development and the fragility of the resource base warrants the establishment of a specific policy for the industry.

The Fisheries Policy aims to ensure the sustainable use of the living marine resources and ecosystems through increased cooperation and collaboration with all the stakeholders for the improved welfare of the people of the TCI. It is founded on the belief that all natural marine living resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands, as well as the environment in which they exist and in which mariculture/aquaculture activities may occur, are national assets and the heritage of all the people, and should be managed and developed for the benefit of present and future generations in the country. As such, the fishery policy will assist in determining the following:



- Setting out the goals and guiding principles for fisheries management and development which will form the basis for the National Fisheries Management plan. This is important, as in the absence of well-articulated policies there is the genuine risk that scarce valuable resources may not be utilized as effectively as they should in the implementation of programmes, projects and ongoing activities.
- Contributing to a consistent management and development approach through successive political administrations (recognising/respecting each administration's power to change/amend the policy).
- Providing a mechanism that enables cooperation with other agencies of government and stakeholders, in the development and implementation of the policy.
- Providing the platform for negotiating investment, funds and capital.
- Forming the basis for institutional and legal arrangements or reforms.
- Providing a framework for integrating fisheries management into all policies, programmes and plans at national and community levels.
- Providing the framework which will assist in meeting the conditions of funding agencies (e.g. DFID, OTEP) that may require the implementation of certain policies, such as integrated management.

At present, the fisheries contribution to the national economy is as follows:

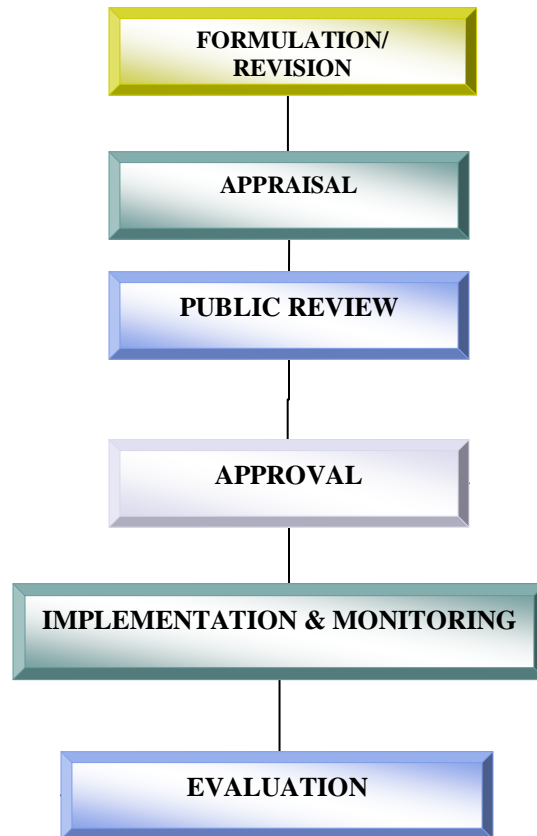
- GDP contribution of fisheries
- Value in terms of export
- Employment
- Per capita consumption of fish

Since the fisheries sector is a relatively small sector within the national economy, its GDP contribution will remain modest when measured in terms of macro-economic significance. However the sector is likely to remain a major source of employment and income, particularly in the lesser developed Islands. Sustainable development of the fisheries sector will be limited by the natural productive capacity of the living marine resources, and as such, all long-term plans for this sector must take this limitation into consideration.

In order to institutionalise the process for cooperation and collaboration (with all the relevant public and private sector stakeholders) in the development and implementation of the fisheries management and development plan for the TCI, the approach set out below will be followed:



FISHERIES PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS



1.3 Environmental Protection Policy

The Environmental Protection Policy aims to ensure that the fragile environment is managed in a sustainable way, so that it continues to contribute to and support the livelihoods of the people of TCI.

The policy seeks to protect the Coastal Zone and promote rational use and development of its resources by way of:

- Integrated management and sustainable development of coastal resources.
- Marine environmental protection: protection (reduction and prevention) of the marine environment from land and sea-based sources of pollution.
- Sustainable use and conservation of inshore and offshore fisheries.
- Sustainable use and conservation of marine resources under national jurisdiction.
- Promoting the conservation of biological diversity.



- Promoting integrated approaches to the planning, use and management of the land and marine resources.
- Strengthening the scientific basis for sustainable development.
- Promoting environmental education and public awareness.

1.4 Tourism Development Policy

The aim of the Government for the development of the tourism industry (as outlined in the TCI National Development Strategy) includes:

- The development and implementation of effective management mechanisms which would ensure that the tourism industry is well-balanced and controlled.
- Reviewing, rebuilding and diversifying the economy of the Turks and Caicos Islands by sustaining existing economic development and attracting new businesses.

2.0 Profile of the Fisheries Sector

2.1 Status of the Fishery Resources of the TCI

2.1.1 *Overview: The Marine Fishery*

The commercial fisheries of the Turks and Caicos Islands occur mainly on the Caicos Bank. The fisheries resources are important to the Turks and Caicos Islands, following tourism and offshore banking in monetary value. Catches are dominated by lobster (*Panulirus argus*) and queen conch (*Strombus gigas*) which are exported primarily to the United States. Lobster is exported mainly as frozen tails and conch as frozen clean meat. The products are mainly landed and processed at any of the five 'A Class' fish processing plants in the country. Other finfish species such as groupers, snappers and large pelagics are caught, but in comparatively smaller amounts. They are utilised for local consumption or as part of the sport fishery.

2.1.2 *Total Production and Trade*

In terms of value, the Queen Conch and Spiny Lobster fisheries are the most valuable fishery in the TCI.

In the 2002/2003 fishing season, the Turks and Caicos Islands exported approximately 659,050 lbs of wild harvested conch meat, 138, 250 lbs of conch trimmings, 6,730 lbs. of maricultured conch meat, 1,770 maricultured live conch, and 6,034 conch shell and shell derivatives.



The worth of these fisheries in the Turks and Caicos Islands is multiplied several fold particularly in the less developed islands, which are heavily dependent on them for jobs and income. These fisheries also play a significant role in supplying the local market (tourist and restaurant trade) with lobster and conch meat as well as conch derivatives (e.g. shells and shell artefacts).

2.1.3 Catch History

Spiny lobster landings in the TCI have fluctuated over the years reaching a peak in 1992 at 1,312,795 lbs. (590 metric tonnes). This was followed by a decline in catch levelling at an average of 600,000 lbs for the past five (5) years.

The Queen Conch fisheries reached a peak production of approximately 5,773,906 lbs (2619 metric tonnes) in 1943 followed by a gradual decline to an all time low of 36,155 lbs. (16.4 metric tonnes) in 1969. The fishery rebounded to a maximum catch level of 2,535,316 lbs. (1150 metric tonnes) in 1980 but levelled at the current quota or Total Allowable Catch (TAC) level of approximately 1,657,876 lbs (752 metric tonnes.) which is in effect currently.

Fluctuations in catch levels are presumed to be the result of over-fishing (Ninnes, 1994) in combination with independent factors such as climate change and recruitment.

2.1.4 Status of Lobster Fishery

In 2001, the D.E.C.R., in collaboration with a consultant from the Cuban Government, assessed the biological as well as the economic status of the spiny lobster fishery of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The result of the assessment indicated that the fishery was operating near the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) level and was approaching a state of overexploitation.

Furthermore, the destructive fishing practices, such as illegal harvesting of undersize lobsters are depleting stocks and increasing the probability of overfishing the stocks. In 1999 the DECR estimated that over 40 % of the annual catches by fishers were below the minimum size.

The rampant use of noxious substances such as bleach, detergents and gasoline to drive lobsters out of the reefs, also is believed to have contributed to the current state of the fishery. These noxious substances ultimately destroy the reefs, thereby rendering these habitats unsuitable for adult lobsters.

The elevated number of persons engaged in the fishery and increasing operating cost has reduced the annual net profit derived from the fishery to an extremely low level of US\$773,295. This translates to a gross profit of approximately US\$0.89 per pound of lobster, which is far less than the net profit (US\$ 1.67 per pound) made by other lobster producing countries such as the Bahamas and Cuba.



2.1.5 Status of Queen Conch Fishery

The Queen Conch populations of the Turks and Caicos Islands are considered to be stable. The national annual export quota of 600,000 lbs is considered to be maintaining the stock size at suitable levels.

2.1.6 Status of the Fin-fish Fishery

The fin-fish fishery is believed to be underutilised, and is therefore considered to be healthy. Ninnes reported in 1990 a potential yield of 70-140 kg/km off the shelf perimeter of the Turks and Caicos Islands (Caicos, Turks, and Mouchoir Banks).

2.2 Mariculture/Aquaculture

Several attempts at mariculture have been made over the year; however, only one has proven to be successful. The Caicos Conch Farm is the only economically profitable establishment in the world that produces juveniles farmed Queen Conch for sushi food markets in the USA/Japan and for the aquarium trade. Since the mid 1990's, export of mariculture/aquaculture conch meat has remained steady at approximately 6, 000 lbs per year.

2.3 Institutional Structure of the Turks and Caicos Island Marine Fisheries

2.3.1 Fisheries and Environmental Protection Legislations

There are several pieces of legislation which form the legal basis for the management and development of the fishery resources and the protection of the marine environment of the TCI. These are:

- Fisheries Protection Ordinance. Cap. 104: This is the main legislation which provides the legal basis and regulations for managing the fishery resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands

Other Fisheries Related Legislation

- Fishery Limit. Cap. 105: Defines the Territorial Waters and Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZ) of the Turks and Caicos Islands.
- National Park Ordinance. Cap. 80: Provides the legal basis for the establishment and management of Marine Protected Areas such as National Parks, Marine Reserves, and Sanctuaries.
- Coastal Protection Ordinance: This legislation combines several pieces of legislation, such as the National Parks Ordinance, Fisheries Protection Ordinance and others to provide protection for the coastal zone.



In addition to the above stated fisheries related legislation, there is the Endangered Species Bill which is currently in draft form. On completion, it will provide the legal basis for protection of endangered species in the Turks and Caicos Islands

2.3.2 Institutional Framework for Fishery Management and Development

The management, development and conservation of the fisheries, aquatic and other resources falls under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Natural Resources, which is headed by an elected official, the Minister of Natural Resources. The Minister responsible for fisheries and natural resources conservation and management serves as the main policy maker/decision-maker. He and the associate Ministers of Executive Council, through a consultative process with various stakeholders and interest groups, develop policies that direct the conservation, use and development of the Islands' natural resources.

The policies and directives of the Minister and/or Executive Council are passed on to the Department Of Environment and Coastal Resources (DECR) through the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Natural Resources, who is also responsible for overseeing and ensuring that the policies and directives are being executed.

The DECR has management responsibility for commercial fisheries and land and marine based Protected Areas. The Department also takes the lead in ensuring that all natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable) are utilized in an environmentally sensitive manner. Its mandate further extends to include the implementation of international conventions, treaties, and other agreements concerned with protecting the environment (MARPOL, Montreal Convention, etc.) and the rational utilization of natural resources (CITES, SPAW Protocol, CBD, UNCLOS etc).

The DECR has been designated as the institution to assist the Minister in undertaking the management of environmental protection activities and the development of related legislation, strategies and plans. It is headed by a Director who has overall responsibility to formulate strategies and plans to ensure sustainable utilization of the natural resources, and to protect and promote biodiversity and economic prosperity, which are in keeping with the overall environmental policies.

The Department is separated into two Divisions; the Protected Areas Division, and the Fisheries Division (Figure 1). The Fisheries Division is headed by the Deputy Director/Chief Conservation Officer who develops and implements management plans for the fisheries resources that are consistent with the policies of the Government. The Deputy Director - PAD oversees the Protected Areas Division, and has the fundamental responsibility for the overall management of the 34 Protected Areas (including national parks, nature reserves, sanctuaries, and sites of historical interest) established within the Turks and Caicos Islands.



Both Divisions are equipped with Conservation Officers, the law enforcement arm of the Department. The Conservation Officers strive to ensure compliance with Fisheries and Environmental Conservation Laws. Scientific research and monitoring on the other hand are conducted by the Scientific Research Officers assisted by Environmental Education Officers and Conservations.

As well as apart from enforcement and research, the Department implements the public awareness programme on fisheries management, conservation and the environment. Education and awareness are viewed as integral parts of the Department's work programme, as these are tools by which knowledge can be disseminated to the community and raise the level of awareness concerning conservation issues. As such, Environmental Officers are assigned to carry out the fisheries and environmental education and awareness programmes.

There are several established committees that act as advisory bodies to the DECR. A Scientific Authority has been instituted to guide the type of research that is conducted throughout the Islands. The Authority also acts as the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Scientific Authority, which is responsible for recommending the total allowable catch for the queen conch fisheries among other functions as outlined in the Draft Wildlife and Endangered Species Bill.

The Fisheries Legislation makes provision for the establishment of a statutory body, known as the Fisheries Advisory Committee (FAC). The FAC is comprised of 5-6 members. The members are generally stakeholders and/or community members that have an interest in the fishery resource of the TCI. The FAC is charged with the responsibility of advising the Minister on aspects of management and development of the fisheries resources. Correspondingly, the National Parks Ordinance provides for the establishment of a similar committee known as the National Parks Advisory Committee (NPAC).

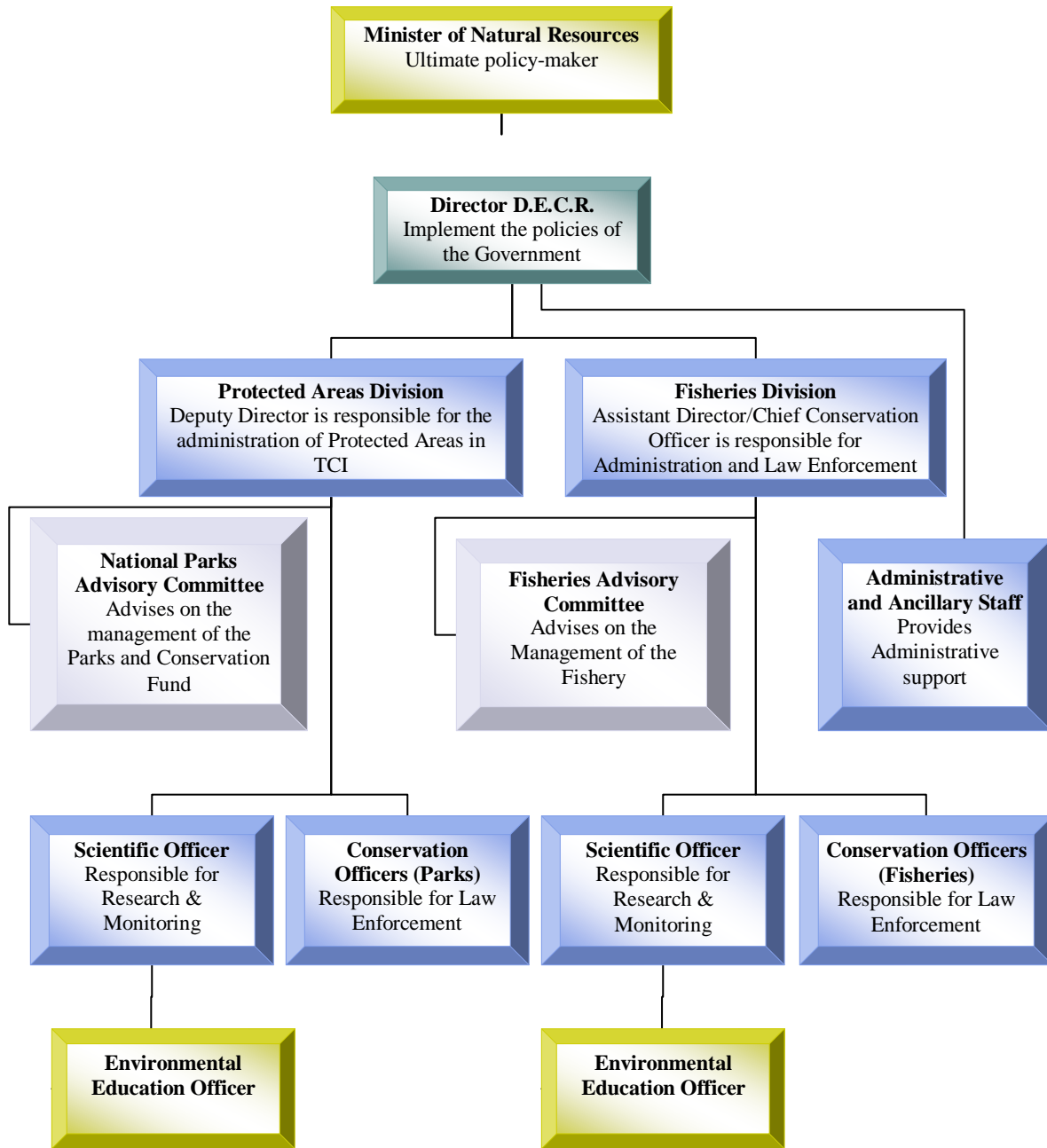


Figure 1: Organogram highlighting the organizational structure of the Department of Environment and Coastal Resources

2.3.3 Funding

All aspects in relation to the managing of the marine fisheries, including research, enforcement and administration, are funded with monies from the consolidated funds voted by the legislative assembly.



2.3.4 Institutional Capacity of the D.E.C.R.

Table 1: The institutional capacity and resources of the Department of Environment & Coastal Resources (D.E.C.R.)

	Protected Areas Division	Fisheries Division
Scientific Officers	1	1
Environment / Education Officers	1	1
Conservation Officers	17	
Ancillary Staff	2	5
Research Vessels		1
Patrol Vessels	1	4
Motor Vehicles	1	3
Budget (2002/2003)		\$1,393,781

The effective implementation of a fisheries policy will be dependent on the institutional capacity and the financial resources available. Given the shortage in technical staff, equipment and man-power of the D.E.C.R., the further strengthening of the Fisheries Division would have to be a priority in order to execute the policy and ensure sustainable and effective management of the marine resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

2.3.5 Monitoring Control and Surveillance (MCS)

The 11 Conservation Officers assigned to the Fisheries Division have the mandate to monitor over 8000 km² of coastal waters, 5 Class 'A', 4 Class 'B' processing plants and over 50 fish vending facilities (e.g. restaurants and hotels). In addition, they have to ensure that on average, the 454 registered commercial fishermen, 143 resident sport fishers and 1472 visiting sport fishers comply with the environmental laws of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

The Marine Police, in collaboration with the Fisheries Division of the D.E.C.R., patrols the territorial waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands. The main priority of the Marine Police is to intercept vessels smuggling drugs and illegal migrants, while the D.E.C.R.'s mandate is to curtail illegal fishing by foreign as well as national fishers.

2.3.6 Quality Assurance for Marine Products in the TCI

Most managers of Class 'A' processing facilities are HACCP certified and have voluntarily implemented some or all aspects of the guidelines for seafood processing and handling within their daily operational routine.

Although the D.E.C.R., in collaboration with the Environmental Health Department, routinely inspects these establishments, there are no country specific guidelines or food processing legislations in the TCI to ensure compliance.



2.3.7 Factors Limiting the Effective Management of the Marine Resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands

The main factors limiting the effective management of the marine resources of the TCI can be summarized as follows:-

- Lack of a fully integrated approach to the management of the environment and marine resources in the decision and policy making process;
- Lack of enforcement capacity (e.g. skilled personnel, vessels, vehicles, etc.);
- Lack of enforcement training for Conservation Officers;
- Lack of technical staff to conduct research;
- Lack of food processing and/or quality assurance legislation; and
- Lack of environmental awareness and inadequate understanding and appreciation of the biodiversity of the marine environment.

3.0 Execution of the Fisheries Policy

The policy for managing the fisheries resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands presents a vision for ‘healthy marine waters that sustain the livelihoods and aspirations of the people of the TCI.’ The coastal waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands are some of the last remaining sources of healthy fisheries and habitats in the region and should be managed effectively to ensure their continued productivity.

The fisheries Policy and vision statement demonstrate the commitment of the Turks and Caicos Islands Government and the people of the country to take care of their ocean and marine resources, which are the most dominant feature of their environment. They are founded on the premise that our marine resources are finite and the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands are stewards of a small part of the ocean, with the overwhelming task of managing these resources for future generations. Also, the policy recognizes the need for partnerships so long as they are properly established, because the Turks and Caicos Islands are small and lack the capacity to sustainably manage the resources.

If the full potential of the marine resources are realized, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands will have very bright future. However, there are many constraints that need to be addressed, such as pollution, natural disasters and illicit human activities. For these reasons, the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands need to take proper care of our marine environment, starting now.



3.1 Challenges to the Implementation of the Fishery Policy

The fisheries policy is intended as a framework that guides and promotes the sustainable management and development of the marine resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands. However, there are several issues, such as, limited technical capacity which is required to provide the knowledge-base necessary to generate information on the status of resources and devise sustainable exploitation and management strategies that may plague its effective implementation.

The lack of appropriate regulations and/or guidelines can be regarded as a potential obstacle to the successful implementation of the fisheries policy, as these are important tools to guide and ensure compliance with the goals and objectives stemming from it.

Much of the work to be carried out in the implementation of the fisheries policy will require strong long-term financial commitment by the Government, without which policy implementation will be doomed to failure.

Considering the over-lapping in management mandate among the Government Departments and NGOs, it is imperative that collaboration among these agencies be established to ensure the effective management of the marine resources and coastal areas.

Apart from collaboration among agencies there is the need to establish strong stakeholder participation. Good stewardship and the involvement of communities at all levels are required for the effective implementation of the fisheries policy. Given that over the years community participation has declined, this may pose a challenge to policy implementation.

Changes in political administration may also hinder the accomplishment of the goals and objectives set out in this policy. With changes in political administration there tends to be a shift in political vision. This may prove to be a major impediment unless both Government and Opposition support the development and implementation of the fisheries policy from its inception and commit themselves to its implementation.

4.0 Guiding Principles of the National Fisheries Policy

Of the fundamental principles that would guide the operationalisation of the fisheries policy of the TCI, specific reference will be made to the following:

Principle1: Holistic approach to fisheries management

This implies an integrated approach to management of the ocean and coastal waters, by taking into account not just the fisheries resources and the marine ecosystems, but also other activities that may compromise the productivity of the resource and the integrity of the marine environment.



Principle 2: Sustainable development and management of the marine resources

The fisheries resources of the TCI provide important source of protein, valuable exports and vital livelihoods to commercial fishers. They also provide the basis for the TCI's largely marine-based tourist industry. To realize their full potential and to sustainably manage them requires improved knowledge of living marine resources (particularly under-utilised resources), the investigation of alternative use patterns to reduce damage and wastage and improved training of personnel to manage marine resources.

The future of the communities of the Turks and Caicos Islands is dependent on how the people maintain the health of the marine resources. It is therefore imperative that principles such as the precautionary approach, integrated development, and adaptive management are articulated and implemented to ensure the continuity of the marine/fisheries resources.

Principle 3: Ensuring that the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands reap the optimum benefit from the exploitation of the fisheries resources.

The marine resources of the Turks and Caicos Islands are national assets and the heritage of its entire people. As such, they should be managed and developed for the benefit of the people.

In this context, custodianship of marine resources is entrusted to the State, which has allocated rights to utilise living and non-living marine resources. At the same time, the Government has to promulgate regulations to ensure that such utilisation is undertaken on a sustainable basis which results in optimal social and economic benefits for all the people.

Principle 4: Reduce Overcapitalisation

There are five Class A processing plants in the Turks and Caicos Islands, several Class B plants, restaurants and hotels which purchase marine products directly from fishermen. Recent socio-economic research has indicated that there are insufficient products (conch and lobster) to continuously sustain all these establishments. The lack of a policy to regulate numbers and control the licensing of these establishments could result in the gradual increase, which ultimately can lead to poor investment. Effective policy implementation will seek to secure investments already made in the industry by determining the required carrying capacity to continue to provide a profit, while streamlining fish landing locations and promoting other investment opportunities to reduce the risk of overcapitalisation and the dissipation of investors' profit.

Principle 5: Managing the effort (number of individuals) in the fishing industry.

Over the past few years, landings have decreased, although the number of individuals in the fishing industry has remained relatively stable. This inevitably causes a decrease in the profits which are attained by individual fisherman. During the implementation of this



policy, the fisheries managers will seek to explore the feasibility of controlling the effort in the fishing industry, bearing in mind the principal consideration that “Belongers are first”.

Principle 6: Improving Monitoring, Control and Surveillance.

Effective enforcement of the various legislations is imperative to achieve success in management, in order to ensure the resources are not over-exploited. The Government acknowledges that this effort will require a political and financial commitment to ensure that the policies, legislations, resources and man-power are in place to improve enforcement of the fisheries and ancillary regulations.

Principle 7: Delineate Maritime Boundaries

The TCI Government recognises that many of the border dispute issues between the Government of the Dominican Republic, The Government of the Bahamas and the UK Government (on behalf of the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands) are not settled.

Effective Monitoring, Control and Surveillance of the resources within the territorial waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands are dependent on defining the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) limits for the TCI.

Principle 8: Improving the worth and contribution of the fisheries and marine resources to national development.

The contributions of the fisheries sector to national economy has steadily declined, with its worth and overall importance being overshadowed by the recent developments in more lucrative sectors such as tourism, construction and financial investment.

To achieve full social and economic benefits from the fisheries resources it will be necessary to: increase the long-term absolute value contribution of fisheries to the GDP; increase employment opportunities in harvesting, processing and non-consumptive use of the living marine resources; encourage the utilization of under-utilised resources; develop domestic and export markets; expand on value-added activities; and promote sports fishing as a tourist attraction, so as to create and sustain a stable and internationally competitive fisheries industry.

Principle 9: Investment Opportunities

Further development through diversification of the fishing industry hinges on the potential for resource users to invest in the industry. The Government is committed to seeking opportunities, and open avenues for resource users to obtain financial assistance and secure credit so as to promote investment and diversification in the fishing industry.



Principle 10: Creating partnerships and promoting co-management

Critical to the implementation of the fisheries policy will be the commitment and genuine involvement of all local social/community groups, particularly if decision making affects the community in which they live and work. While the local communities should be involved in these management exercises, there are also specific roles for the district, national, and regional stakeholders and institutions. The multiple uses of the marine resources require collaboration and partnerships between the users from an early stage. This will foster greater confidence in the management strategy thereby promoting harmonious co-management of the resource.

In partnership with local communities, the Government should aim to establish a process to empower local communities by:-

- Adopting appropriate legal instruments
- Recognizing that dependence on renewable resources is essential to the cultural, economic and physical well-being of local communities.

Principle 11: Improve relationship with other Overseas Territories

The Government recognises the financial, political and cultural similarities between the Caribbean Overseas Territories. Strong relationship between the OT's and the Turks and Caicos Islands exist but are generally manifested in avenues of political and financial deliberations. The Government is committed to further improve relationships with other OT's in the management of the environment and marine resources.

Principle 12: Improve participation in regional and international initiatives.

The Turks and Caicos Islands has demonstrated effective partnerships and cooperation in the sustainable development of the marine resources. This should be strengthened and include new and emerging partners from within and from outside the region. Efforts should be undertaken to improve regional collaboration in the management of the fisheries resources through active participation in regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM).

Through extension by the United Kingdom, the Turks and Caicos Islands are mandated to comply with numerous environmental international agreements, for example ICCAT, CITES etc. Although tremendous efforts have been undertaken by the TCI Government to ensure compliance, over the years TCI has not actively participated in the decision making process. The Government recognises that it is in the best interest of the Turks and Caicos Islands to actively participate in all aspects of management of the marine resources.



Principle 13: Improving our understanding of the marine resources and our ability to manage and develop the resources.

Understanding the marine environment enables the acquisition and amalgamation of information for the better formulation of environmental and developmental policies. The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands need to improve their knowledge of the marine environment, how it functions and how it is affected by the changes caused by human activities. This knowledge will provide the basis for effective decision making and planning in the areas of fisheries management and development and integrated coastal zone management.

Too often, management decisions are made that are not guided by scientific research. Effective resource management principles should be applied at all levels using all available methods. Integration of traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific information is critical if the decision-makers of the Turks and Caicos Islands are to have a better understanding of the marine environment and its resources.

This knowledge can only be achieved through improving our scientific understanding of the resource and by the application of modern and effective tools such as remote sensing and powerful computing and modelling capabilities.

The sciences should continue to play an increasing role in providing for improvements in the efficiency of resource utilization and to promote less intensive trends in resource utilization. In the face of threats of irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific knowledge should not be an excuse for postponing action. The precautionary approach should be applied when scientific knowledge is lacking. There are four key areas with respect to the role of science in sustainable development: strengthening the scientific-base, enhancing scientific understanding, improving long-term assessment and building scientific capacity and capability.

Principle 14: Aquaculture and mariculture development

Mariculture and aquaculture activities are growing rapidly throughout the world, and are expected to increase in Turks and Caicos Islands. Mariculture and aquaculture have emerged as viable means of economic development in some countries and the number of proposals for large shrimp and lobster farm operations in the TCI is increasing. Despite the fact that there are water quality issues associated with such developments, with the appropriate guidelines maricultural and aquacultural operations can be an effective tool to alleviate pressures on the natural fisheries resources and generate additional employment and income.

Principle 15: Post harvest handling; food safety and health

Over 180,000 people visit the Turks and Caicos Island each year, consuming a significant quantity of marine products from the local restaurants and hotels. Most of these products are harvested and processed in the TCI. Given the importance of the tourist industry we



cannot risk potential food poisoning of the visiting and local population. Statistics from the World Health Organisation (WHO) have shown that most reported cases of food borne disease results from improper holding temperatures, followed by poor personal hygiene, inadequate cooking, contaminated equipment, and food from an unsafe source.

In addition, in the wake of September 11, 2001, the U.S. FDA (United States Food & Drug Admonition) has imposed strict food safety guidelines. Legislation, such as the Bioterrorism Act, has stringent food handling and harvesting regulations to which all food processors exporting to the U.S. must adhere.

As such, the Government should seek to improve existing food safety guidelines and standards, thereby benefiting both public health and economic development.

Principle 16: Managing the importation of marine products.

Importation of marine products is not monitored or controlled. Currently, anyone with a business license can import marine products from any part of the world. Very few of these marine products are inspected, neither are these companies required by law to have proper sanitary practices. The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands is cognisant that the tourism industry is very fragile, and that the marine products of the Turks and Caicos should be of the highest quality. This policy will seek to ensure that both industries continue to be profitable by streamlining the importation of marine products and promoting imports from countries with proper sanitary food handling records.

Principle 17: Promoting environmental education and public awareness.

Education, development of public awareness and training are linked to virtually all areas of policy implementation. Education is critical for promoting sustainable development and improving the capacity of all people to address environmental and developmental issues. Both formal and non-formal education is indispensable to changing people's attitudes so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable resource utilization and development concerns. It is also critical for achieving environmental awareness, values, attitudes and behaviour consistent with sustainable development and for effective public participation in the decision making process.



5.0 Policy Statement

The Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands is committed to;

- ensuring the effective and sustainable use and management of fisheries resources in the Turks and Caicos Islands.
- promoting diversification within the marine fisheries industry of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

5.1 Strategy for Implementation

The strategy and plan for policy implementation must, of necessity, involve a participatory approach that allows fishers, plant operators, and other stakeholders in the fisheries industry to “buy in” to the process of sustainable fisheries management.

A draft Marine Fisheries Management Plan (2005-2010) is being developed and would serve as the means of implementing the policy and achieving the goals and objectives outlined herein. Within the context of the Plan, the vision, goals and objectives are as follows:

5.2 Vision Statement

A healthy marine environment that sustains the livelihood and aspirations of the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands in the present and for generations to come.

5.3 Goals

Economic

- To maximise the net incomes of the participants (e.g fishers) in the respective fisheries.
- To increase the sector’s contribution to Gross Domestic Product by expanding production, through better management of existing fisheries, the promotion of new ones and the continued development of value added products for export.

Biological

- To manage the fisheries resources at or above the levels necessary to ensure their continued productivity for present and future generations.
- To minimise the impacts of fishing on the physical environment (habitats, nursery, spawning areas), non-target (by-catch) species and associated and dependent species.



- To ensure that the levels and patterns of exploitation are determined on the basis of best available scientific information, and where data is lacking, by the precautionary principles.

Socio-political

- To optimise employment and promote job creation in harvesting, processing and use of underutilised and unutilised living marine resources, particularly in those islands that do not have many other opportunities for economic growth.
- To ensure that the fishing industry is integrated into the policy and decision-making processes concerning the environment, the Protected Areas and the wider developmental issues.
- To promote and encourage the involvement and participation of stakeholders in the management of the fishery resources and foster inter-sectoral decision making in relation to fisheries
- To ensure that the development of the fisheries sector is enhanced by regional and international collaborations (e.g. Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, Food & Agricultural Organization) and participation (ICCAT, CITES), in keeping with international and regional obligations.

5.4 Objectives

- Ensure that the catch in any one-year does not exceed the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY).
- Restore and/or maintain populations of marine species to sustainable levels, that is, at the level that can give the MSY.
- Conserve local populations of endangered species and ensure sustainable harvest and trade.
- Strengthen scientific and research capabilities in order to obtain relevant information on the fisheries resources such as carrying capacity, stock status etc.
- Enhance income generation by a factor of 15% by improving and creating market opportunities for fish products at the national, regional and international levels by 2009.
- Ensure that the benefits from the exploitation of the fisheries resources are optimised by Belongers.
- Promote diversification in resource exploitation of the TCI fisheries.
- Streamline, monitor and regulate the importation of marine products.



- Establish mechanisms to reduce overcapitalisation in the fishing industry.
- Develop and seek opportunities for resource users to obtain financial assistance/credit from crediting agencies.
- Improve and/or develop associated infrastructures in relation to the exploitation, processing and marketing of fisheries products.
- Develop and implement strategies to improve the standard of living of fisherfolks and the communities in which they live.
- Ensure that post harvest handling, processing and distribution of fish and fishery products are carried out in a manner that maintains the highest quality and nutritional value.
- Develop and implement food processing and handling guidelines/ regulations for quality assurance.
- Improve the man-power and resources of the Fisheries Division to ensure effective monitoring, control and surveillance of fishing activities.
- Promote and maintain a “Zero Tolerance” in enforcement of the legislations.
- Develop and Implement strategies to deter and combat Illegal, Underreported and Unreported (IUU) fishing in the waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands.
- Improve stakeholder participation in the management of the marine resources.
- Achieve inter and intra-agency collaboration on the matters that may affect the fisheries resources and associated habitats.
- Improve relationship with other OT’s in the management of the marine resources and the environment.
- Improve TCI’s collaboration and participation in regional and international initiatives in the management of the fisheries resource.
- Promote talks to delineate and conclude maritime boundaries discourse between the TCI and The Dominican Republic as well as The Bahamas.
- Promote mariculture/aquaculture of indigenous species of invertebrates and fish as a means of diversifying income and diet.
- Develop and implement mariculture/aquaculture guidelines and regulations.



- Achieve environmental and developmental awareness of marine resources in all sectors of society from primary school through adulthood.